

THE NEW REPUBLIC

A Journal of Opinion Volume 152 Number 21 Issue 2635 May 22, 1965
Published weekly (except July and August when it is biweekly) and distributed by The New Republic, 1244 19th St., N.W., Washington, D. C. 20036. Phone FEderal 8-2494. Single copy 35c. Yearly subscription, \$8; Foreign, \$9; Armed Forces personnel or students, \$6.50. Send all remittances and correspondence about subscriptions, undelivered copies, and changes of addresses to Subscription Department, The New Republic, 381 West Center Street, Marion, Ohio 43301. Copyright© 1965 by Harrison-Blaine of New Jersey, Inc. Item g. Second Class Postage Paid at Washington, D. C. Indexed in Readers' Guide.

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Deeper and Deeper

Lyndon Johnson has to look out when Senator Eastland, *The Chicago Tribune*, Joe Alsop and, by inference, Barry Goldwater shower praises on his policy in the Dominican Republic and Vietnam. That isn't consensus, it's captivity. The appetite for action grows by what it feeds on. "Castro's Turn Next?" exuberantly asked the brashest of the three national newsmagazines last week. In Paris, just before dropping in on a tattooist called Bruno to have the insignia of an honorary chief of the Hopi Indians engraved on his left fist, Barry Goldwater paused long enough to clench his right. If he were Lyndon Johnson, he said, he would now "pray for a provocation to bomb Communist China's nuclear installations." Columnist Alsop surfaced in London with a bizarre – coming from him – demand that American critics of US foreign policy wear muzzles. His theory is that the *Times* of London and similar left-wing foreign publications are disseminating a distorted view of US actions in the Dominican Republic, that they get by reading the slanted news printed in the *Times* which is published in New York.

Sure, the President of the United States has to make tough decisions. He is even entitled to decide for instant action without waiting to consult Congress or any other body, if he strongly feels that the security of the country demands that. But how many people seriously believe that Marines were rushed to the Dominican Republic because the United States was in peril? Nothing said or revealed since suggests convincingly that the US was in danger. Mr. Johnson's tough action is cheered loudest by those who want only strong-man right-wing governments in Latin America. As Mr. Goldwater remarked in Madrid, "I think this [Franco's] is a fine system and I have great admiration for what Franco is doing."

But last week in the Dominican Republic this simple-minded philosophy had hit a snag. When there are more strong men than one, which do you pick? At first, the US seemed to be backing General Wessin y Wessin, the military chief who overthrew democratically elected President Juan Bosch in 1963. Then it appeared to wish to switch to General Antonio Imbert Barreras (who incidentally was *persona non grata* to the US in 1962), but Wessin betrayed an embarrassing disinclination to step aside. In this fix, the State Department announced that it would not recognize any government until that government had demonstrated it "is in control of the political machinery of the Dominican Republic." In fact, the Marines and other US forces

as well as the USIA and the Voice of America had all along been supporting the discredited and beaten junta that includes both Wessin and Imbert, but at this point former US Ambassador John Bartlow Martin, the one American in Santo Domingo who seemed to have Mr. Johnson's ear, finally got around to seeing the "rebel" leader, Colonel Francisco Caamano, until then an untouchable who the State Department had said was "moving closer to the Communists." After more than 17 days of US military occupation the situation in the Dominican Republic was still dangerously up in the air, with tempers still tense and fingers on triggers.

The US has to find a way out of its Dominican imbroglio soon. Another "strong man" won't do, unless it is US policy to multiply Communists in Latin America by offering democratic forces no other sanctuary save some Communist variety. Fortunately, as suggested in these pages last week, there is a way out that ought to be generally acceptable to Washington, the Dominican people, and the OAS. Freely held elections, under the watching eye of the OAS, will get the US fairly off its Dominican hook.

And Vietnam? Though Congress voted overwhelmingly to give the President the \$700-million military appropriation he asked for but did not need, there is large, growing disquiet about our entrapment in South-

east Asia. Senator Robert Kennedy (who also criticized the President for acting overhastily in the Dominican Republic and without consulting the OAS) said carefully that in Vietnam "efforts for peace should continue with the same intensity as efforts in the military field"; an indication that he thinks they haven't. Senator Cooper, a Republican and former Ambassador to India, urged the President to "continue his efforts to find some avenue for negotiation" in Vietnam.

Mr. Johnson tried hard to suggest that he is doing just what Kennedy and Cooper want, when he spoke last week in Washington, but his speech to a group of editorial cartoonists contained nothing new. If only "our adversaries" will stop fighting, the US will help transform Southeast Asia — presumably including North as well as South Vietnam — into a paradise well-stocked with sweet potatoes. Once again, the Soviet Union and "every other industrialized country" (China?) was invited to help "this great Asian project." Meanwhile, though the US is "ready for unconditional discussions" it will "not abandon our commitment in South Vietnam," and "force will meet force." The President reiterated his belief that China is the evil genie behind Hanoi and wants the war to go on; nevertheless he invited North Vietnam to "come to the conference table." But it is also part of his thesis that Hanoi controls the Viet Cong in the South and therefore it's no use asking the Viet Cong to come to the conference table. The two things don't hang together. If the US wants to try to end the war and believes that "there is no purely military solution in sight for either side," the Administration should be willing to talk to the Viet Cong. It says it won't.

So the war will go on for a while longer, with all the horrid consequences for the hapless Vietnamese, both North and South, that the President harrowingly described: the bombings and the napalm raids, the killings and kidnappings, the diseases and epidemics, the untended sick and the hungry children. The air raids on North Vietnam have had no perceptible influence on Hanoi, except possibly a toughening one. In the South the Viet Cong guerrillas, also apparently undaunted, are mysteriously regrouping, perhaps for a major offensive. Mr. Johnson found it "incredible" that "there are a few who still say the South Vietnamese do not want to continue this struggle." Of course he meant the Saigon government's forces, not the guerrillas. But the South Vietnamese army's desertion rate apparently remains high, and Saigon's bid to raise 100,000 more men seems unlikely to succeed. What many members of Congress fear is that the US will try to improve the military balance by pouring in thousands more American ground troops as well as intensifying the air assaults on the North. The danger of still further escalation of the war has not diminished.

